

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Queen City Steel Treating Co.

Ohio Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Queen City Steel Treating Company "Kickstarts" Productivity

Client Profile:

Queen City Steel Treating Company, located in Cincinnati, Ohio, has been a commercial heat-treater since 1922. Employing 30 people at the Camp Washington plant, the company's area clients include Timken, Cincinnati Mine Machine, ARTech, and Finetool Cincinnati.

Situation:

In July 2001, President Judy Houchens noticed sales at Queen City Steel Treating Company start to drop. This change in volume marked the beginning of the economic slowdown for her commercial heat-treating company--and the beginning of her efforts to revamp the business and look for new markets. That's when Houchens discovered TechSolve, a NIST MEP network affiliate, and its KickStart Manufacturing program. Designed to help small manufacturers boost profitability, the six-week course helps company leaders develop effective business plans.

Solution:

Queen City Steel and dozens of other Cincinnati companies are using the KickStart program to keep their businesses growing--especially during uncertain economic times. The company knew it had to apply lean practices to operations to survive the downturn. Ms. Houchens sent three employees to workshops on lean manufacturing while she and Benton Clift, her manager of information systems and technology resources, attended the KickStart program. There they relearned some of the basics.

KickStart is designed to help companies set and achieve higher goals, build better business plans, and effectively share them with employees. TechSolve and speakers from various sectors work with KickStart students to learn how to create a sustainable market. They learn research capabilities, especially finding competitive and marketing information online. Students also learn to identify financial objectives and benchmark against them to determine if improvements need to be made and where to make them.

At Queen City Steel Treating, the KickStart experience led to the hiring of a sales representative, new marketing materials, and the implementation of some simple yet important changes in operations, including the moving of equipment to free up more floor space, making it easier for employees to do their jobs. All of these changes are a step toward the company's goal of utilizing its excess capacity.

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Results:

Learned basics of building strategic business and marketing plans.

Hired a new dedicated sales representative.

Organized the plant to increase efficiency, capacity, and productivity.

Testimonial:

"For us to remain competitive in our food chain, we had to go lean--it was expected by our clients. [Techsolve's program] gave us confidence."

Judy Houchens, President